

HONORING TOMMY “MR. NOTTIE”  
GUNNS, JR.

**HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON**

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, July 31, 2014*

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a man of noble character from Shaw, MS in Bolivar County.

I believe that when you give honor and recognition to someone they should truly deserve it. I am always happy when I meet someone or hear their story about overcoming, rising from obscurity, coming from meager beginnings but leaving a legacy although unaware; which doesn't get the recognition and thanks it really deserves. This is why I want to honor Mr. Tommy Gunns, Jr. a man of “noble” character.

Childhood: Nottie was originally from Egypt, MS in Chickasaw County, MS. He was born in the year 1900 to Mr. Tommy Gunns, Sr. and Mrs. Alberta Gunns. Nottie was raised in a home with his mother, his only sister named Alma, and his stepfather, “Mr. Brick”. His parents were sharecroppers and struggled; which was the backdrop for an unstable home environment that easily led to abuse. And Nottie was often times the one subjected to the abuse (verbal and physical) by his stepfather. Since his mother could not protect him and because of years of abuse, he developed the drive early in life to want “better,” so he planned to run away, someday. In his plan, he always included Alma, his young sister.

The day came when he ran away and took Alma with him, never returning home. Nottie ran away and arrived in Shaw, MS in 1914. He was just a young teenager when he ran away. When Nottie arrived in Shaw, he worked as many odd jobs as he could find and raised his sister alone; vowing to never let anyone else abuse him or his little sister. In fact, he was so protective of her that he never eased up until he had approved of the man she married. He had to be assured the man was not abusive and was a good provider for Alma.

A Young Man and Family Man: As a young man working in Shaw he was able to acquire many skills and a reputation as a fast learner, hard worker, and a person of good moral character, which equated to a nonsense type of reputation. He was still determined to have a better life and wanted to be respected and treated like a man so he carried himself like a man. Nottie eventually earned that reputation and people began calling him Mr. Nottie or Mr. Gunns. Some of the jobs he worked included driving trucks to haul logs, a loader at the Shaw lumber yard, and sharecropping as a small farmer. While working at the Shaw lumber yard, he learned the skill of carpentry; and became known as a master carpenter around Shaw. Everyone wanted him to do their work.

Mr. Gunns eventually met and married, Nancy Hunt of Shaw, MS. The couple had ten children, 2 died shortly after child birth. Mr. Gunns wanted a big loving family that was full of happy times but serious about life. He directed his journey and based goals in life on his childhood, all that he never had, he was determined to experience before dying. His and Nancy's children are Berna “BB” Gunns-Williams, Nathaniel “Baby Sister” Gunns-Clark, Tommy “Win” Gunns, Jr. (although he

is the 3rd), Christine Gunns-Gardner, Torries Gunns, Maurine “Morgan” Gunns-Gray, Shirley Ann “Shelly” Gunns-Juette, and Lonnie Lee Gunns.

As a husband, father, and community member, Mr. Gunns saw the need to become more involved. You see he wanted to be a role model for his children; he wanted to make sure they had a good upbringing and education, so he felt he needed to get involved in the community and help make it happen. Mr. Gunns served as a volunteer fireman for the city. He wasn't trying to be a hero or win a popularity campaign; he just wanted a better life for his children. Mr. Gunns number one priority was education for all colored children.

Since he was very vocal about education he was asked to become a member of the Board of Trustees for the Shaw Colored School.

The Shaw Colored School only educated children to the 8th grade. Beyond 8th grade the colored children had to travel to Greenville or surrounding towns for a high school education. Mr. Gunns helped changed that. He convinced the Board of Trustees to agree to vote on establishing a curriculum for 9th through 12th grades for Shaw students to be able to get their high school education. So, under his tutelage the first high school graduating class from the Shaw Colored High School was in 1949.

How did he do it? Mr. Gunns had an unyielding faith. That was the same faith that brought him as a young teenage runaway with his little sister, Alma, safely to Shaw, MS during the early 1900s. His faith in God provided him with jobs to take care of himself and his sister as a young boy, alone in the Mississippi Delta. His ability to pick up on things and learn fast paid off because he became that master carpenter. His daughter, Maurine said he could build a house from the ground up. He was a devoted member and deacon of the Strangers Home M.B. Church in Shaw, where he was laid to rest for eternity. And those trying times were no match for his common sense, the old folks called it “mother wit” for survival. It was the foundation of his approach on how to survive in life:

Financial Policy—never spend all your money. Save some for a rainy day.

Child Rearing—everybody has a role and place. Only adults are in charge and children are to stay in their place and do as they are told. He called it his no nonsense approach to raising children. He would often paraphrase Proverbs 13:24, by saying “Spare the rod and spoil the child.”

Preparation—your future depends on your education. “All my children are going to college. I had enough children to work and chip in to help pay for everyone's college,” he would say.

The End: The first of Mr. Gunns children to go to college was Berna at the age of 16. This was made possible by two reasons: (1) everyone in the family picked and chopped cotton, and (2) his financial policy of saving money. The children all knew their earnings went to their parents to help provide for the family and save for college. Berna went to Tuskegee Institute in 1950 in Tuskegee, AL. Berna graduated before he died. He was able to see the first of his children to get a college education. His daughter, Berna remembers her father and mother faces as they watched her graduate with all her sisters and brothers watching as well. They knew they had to do it too.

Berna went on to become a self-employed, self-made millionaire. She started her own company “Scrubbles Janitorial Service” in her home and grew it to become a multi-million dollar company in Washington, DC. She was able to live that better life because of her fathers' determination to clear the path.

Mr. Gunns didn't live to see another one of his children to go to college, he died in 1954 but he had already planted the seeds for success. Everyone in the family knew their place and role. Mrs. Gunns, his wife and eldest daughter, Berna carried on his mantra for every child of his going to college. Mrs. Gunns continued to work as the cafeteria manager and cook for the Shaw Colored School.

Tommy, his eldest son, became the father figure for his siblings. Since his father had taught him the carpentry trade, Tommy was able to get his father's job at the Shaw Lumber Yard. It was a year later in 1958 that he got the job because graduating from high school was priority in 1957. The family never missed a check; he knew the money was going to help pay for his siblings to finish high school and attend college. Tommy eventually went to college in 1959 by getting a job with Mississippi Vocational College (now called Mississippi Valley State University—MVSU) driving the school bus picking up students in Bolivar and Sunflower County. That was one of the ways he was able to pay his way through college, as well as it served as his transportation to and from the College. The other way was when Dean Isaac offered him a work study job to help build other buildings on campus (i.e., the auditorium, and campus maintenance) because he had seen his work as a student. As a requirement for graduation, Tommy had to build something to show he had mastered his trade. But the requirement was reconsidered when he drove his instructor to Shaw and showed him the house he built along with the blueprint he had drawn. When asked how, Tommy told him “My Dad is a master carpenter and he taught me this stuff a long time ago.” That house was for his best friend, Roy Magee and the family still lives there. In fact, Tommy still has the blueprints he drew. Tommy was a part of the team that built the first house on campus for the first president of Mississippi Valley State University, Dr. James H. White. The house now serves as the National Alumni House on the campus of the University. Tommy did not graduate until 1964 because of split session with his degree in Industrial Arts. He became the Industrial Art instructor for the Shaw School District, working for 30 years until his retirement.

All of Mr. Gunns children went to college and became very successful in their own rights with good jobs, homes, cars, money to send their children to college, and blessed to see retirement, etc. But Berna and Tommy stood out as the oldest daughter and son after their father's death. As for Mr. Gunns master carpentry skills, his son, Tommy and grandson, Undra Gunns (son of Torries and Dorothy Washington-Gunns) acquired that skill. So, he lives on in many ways and in many accomplishments without even trying to do so, he left a legacy.

One more mention on how did he do it? Mr. Gunns received only a 2nd grade education. He never learned to read or write. But, his stepfather, “Mr. Brick” taught him how to count. And passed that on to his children by

teaching them how to add, subtract, multiply, and divide. That's all he could do in terms of academics. It was his faith in God, his common sense, determination, and ability to count money and perform mathematical operations in his head, and serve on the school board, which sparked change in education in Shaw. All those things got him through life and he was destined to accomplish the things he did. "If you don't walk in purpose, you won't walk in destiny." Find your purpose in life and walk it out (Quote by: Farrah Gray). Now, that's how he did it.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me today in recognizing the legacy of Tommy "Mr. Nottie" Gunns, Jr. from the Second Congressional District of Mississippi.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

**HON. JOHN C. CARNEY, JR.**

OF DELAWARE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, July 31, 2014*

Mr. CARNEY. Mr. Speaker, I wish to clarify my position on rollcall votes cast between July 9, 2014 and July 17, 2014.

On rollcall vote No. 371, on consideration of an amendment offered to H.R. 4923 by Mr. MCALLISTER I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "no."

On rollcall vote No. 372, on consideration of an amendment offered to H.R. 4923 by Ms. HAHN I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "aye."

On rollcall vote No. 373, on consideration of an amendment offered to H.R. 4923 by Mr. GOSAR I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "no."

On rollcall vote No. 374, on consideration of an amendment offered to H.R. 4923 by Mr. WENSTRUP I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "no."

On rollcall vote No. 375, on consideration of an amendment offered to H.R. 4923 by Mr. SWALWELL I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "aye."

On rollcall vote No. 376, on consideration of an amendment offered to H.R. 4923 by Mr. BYRNE I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "no."

On rollcall vote No. 377, on consideration of an amendment offered to H.R. 4923 by Mr. MCCLINTOCK I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "no."

On rollcall vote No. 378, on consideration of H.R. 803 I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "yea."

On rollcall vote No. 379, on consideration of an amendment offered to H.R. 4923 by Mr. MCCLINTOCK I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "no."

On rollcall vote No. 380, on consideration of an amendment offered to H.R. 4923 by Ms. BONAMICI I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "aye."

On rollcall vote No. 381, on consideration of an amendment offered to H.R. 4923 by Ms. SPEIER I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "aye."

On rollcall vote No. 382, on consideration of an amendment offered to H.R. 4923 by Ms. TITUS I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "no."

On rollcall vote No. 383, on consideration of an amendment offered to H.R. 4923 by Mr. SCHIFF I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "aye."

On rollcall vote No. 384, on consideration of an amendment offered to H.R. 4923 by Mr. QUIGLEY I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "aye."

On rollcall vote No. 385, on consideration of an amendment offered to H.R. 4923 by Mr. CHABOT I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "no."

On rollcall vote No. 386, on consideration of an amendment offered to H.R. 4923 by Ms. TITUS I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "no."

On rollcall vote No. 387, on consideration of an amendment offered to H.R. 4923 by Ms. DELAURO I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "aye."

On rollcall vote No. 388, on consideration of an amendment offered to H.R. 4923 by Mr. KING I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "no."

On rollcall vote No. 389, on consideration of an amendment offered to H.R. 4923 by Mr. LANKFORD I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "no."

On rollcall vote No. 390, on consideration of an amendment offered to H.R. 4923 by Mr. CASSIDY I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "no."

On rollcall vote No. 391, on ordering the previous question for H. Res. 661 I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "nay."

On rollcall vote No. 392, on consideration of H. Res. 661 I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "nay."

On rollcall vote No. 393, on consideration of an amendment offered to H.R. 4923 by Mr. BURGESS I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "no."

On rollcall vote No. 394, on consideration of an amendment offered to H.R. 4923 by Mr. LAMALFA I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "no."

On rollcall vote No. 395, on consideration of an amendment offered to H.R. 4923 by Mr. STOCKMAN I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "no."

On rollcall vote No. 396, on consideration of an amendment offered to H.R. 4923 by Mr. STOCKMAN I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "no."

On rollcall vote No. 397, on consideration of an amendment offered to H.R. 4923 by Mr. MCKINLEY I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "no."

On rollcall vote No. 398, on consideration of an amendment offered to H.R. 4923 by Ms. BLACKBURN I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "no."

On rollcall vote No. 399, on consideration of an amendment offered to H.R. 4923 by Mr. GOSAR I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "no."

On rollcall vote No. 400, on consideration of an amendment offered to H.R. 4923 by Mr. HUDSON I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "no."

On rollcall vote No. 401, on the motion to recommit for H.R. 4923 I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "yea."

On rollcall vote No. 402, on final passage of H.R. 4923 I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "nay."

On rollcall vote No. 403, on the motion to recommit to H.R. 4718 I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "yea."

On rollcall vote No. 404, on final passage of H.R. 4718 I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "nay."

On rollcall vote No. 405, on consideration of H.R. 4195 I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "yea."

On rollcall vote No. 406, on consideration of H.R. 5029 I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "yea."

On rollcall vote No. 407, on ordering the previous question to H. Res. 669 I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "yea."

On rollcall vote No. 408, on passage of H. Res. 669 I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "yea."

On rollcall vote No. 409, on consideration of an amendment offered to H.R. 5016 by Ms. JACKSON LEE I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "aye."

On rollcall vote No. 410, on consideration of an amendment offered to H.R. 5016 by Ms. MOORE I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "aye."

On rollcall vote No. 412, on consideration of an amendment offered to H.R. 5016 by Ms. WATERS I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "aye."

On rollcall vote No. 413, on consideration of the motion to recommit with instructions H.R. 5021 I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "yea."

On rollcall vote No. 414, on passage of H.R. 5021 I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "yea."

On rollcall vote No. 428, on ordering the previous question to H. Res. 670 I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "nay."

On rollcall vote No. 429, on passage of H. Res. 670 I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "yea."

On rollcall vote No. 430, on the motion to instruct for H.R. 3230 I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "yea."

On rollcall vote No. 431, on the motion to recommit for H.R. 4719 I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "yea."

On rollcall vote No. 432, on passage of H.R. 4719 I did not vote. It was my intention to vote "nay."

I would also like to take this opportunity to clarify my vote on final passage of H.R. 4923 and H.R. 5021.

On H.R. 4923 I would have voted for the bill despite concerns about the increase in funding for fossil fuel research at the expense of decreases in funding for renewable energy technologies. Furthermore, I was concerned by a policy rider that would prevent the EPA and Army Corps of Engineers from moving forward with rulemaking to clarify the definition of Waters of the U.S. under the Clean Water Act.

On H.R. 5021 I voted yes because it is critically important that we keep our Highway Trust Fund solvent and transportation projects moving forward. However, I am frustrated that we have not yet been able to achieve a longer-term fix for the Highway Trust Fund. In crafting a new highway reauthorization I urge my colleagues to work on a bipartisan basis to ensure a reliable, dedicated funding source for our highway projects.